

**Thomas Jefferson to George Logan, May 19, 1816 , from
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Ford.**

TO DR. GEORGE LOGAN J. MSS.

Monticello, May 19. 16.

It gives me the greatest pain, dear Sir, to make a serious complaint to you. From the letter which I wrote you on the 3d of Oct. 1813, an extract was published with my name, in the newspapers, conveying a very just, but certainly a very harsh censure on Bonaparte. This produced to me more complaints from my best friends, and called for more explanations than any transaction of my life had ever done. They inferred from this partial extract an approbation of the conduct of England, which yet the same letter had censured with equal rigour. It produced too from the Minister of Bonaparte a complaint, not indeed formal, for I was but a private citizen, but serious, of my volunteering with England in the abuse of his sovereign. It was incumbent on me to explain, by declaring to a member of the government that the extract was partial, and its publication unauthorised. Notwithstanding the pain which this act had cost me, considering it on your part but as a mere inadvertence, on the receipt of your letter of Aug. 16. 15. I wrote an answer of Oct. 13. & again on receipt of that of the 27th Ult. I had begun an answer, when the arrival of our mail put into my hands a newspaper containing at full length mine of Oct. 13. It became necessary then to ask myself seriously whether I meant to enter as a political champion in the field of the newspapers? He who does this throws the gauntlet of challenge to every one who will take it up. It behoves him then to weigh maturely every sentiment, every fact, every sentence and syllable he commits to paper, and to be certain

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that he is ready with reason, and testimony to maintain every tittle before the tribunal of the public. But this is not our purpose when we write to a friend. We are careless, incorrect, in haste, perhaps under some transient excitement, and we hazard things without reflection, because without consequence in the bosom of a friend.

Perhaps it may be said that the letter of Oct. 15 contained nothing offensive to others, nothing which could injure myself. It contained reprobation of the murders and desolations committed by the French nation, under their leader Bonaparte. It contained a condemnation of the allied powers for seizing and taking to themselves independent & unoffending countries, because too weak to defend themselves. In this they had done wrong, but was it my business to become the public accuser? And to undertake before the world to renounce their iniquities? And do you not think I had a right to decide this for myself? And to say whether the sentiments I trusted to you were meant for the whole world? I am sure that on reflection you will perceive that I ought to have been consulted.

I might have manifested my dissatisfaction by a silent reserve of all answer. But this would have offered a blank, which might have been filled up with erroneous imputations of sentiment. I prefer candid and open expression. No change of good will to you, none in my estimate of your integrity or understanding, has taken place, except as to your particular opinion on the rights of correspondence: and I pray you especially to assure Mrs. Logan of my constant and affectionate esteem & attachment, the just tribute of a respect for the virtues of her heart & head.¹

¹ Jefferson further wrote to Logan.

“ Monticello, June 20. 1816.

“Dear Sir,—Your favor of the 5th is now received. I never doubted the purity of your intentions in the publications of which I complained; but the correctness only of committing to the public a private correspondence not intended for their eye. As to federal slanders, I never wished them to be answered, but by the tenor of my life, half a century of which

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has been on a theatre at which the public have been spectators, and competent judges of it's merit. Their approbation has taught a lesson, useful to the world, that the man who fears no truths has nothing to fear from lies. I should have fancied myself half guilty had I condescended to put pen to paper in refutation of their falsehoods, or drawn to them respect by any notice from myself. But let all this be forgotten. Knowing now my repugnance to take any part in public discussions, I shall be confident in future of being spared that pain, and avail myself freely of every occasion of renewing to Mrs. Logan and yourself the assurance of my sincere & friendly remembrance; respect and attachment."